

REMARKS

The only remaining issues with respect to this application are obviousness rejections to claims 3 and 5, based on Houde et al. and the newly cited Chambers et al. reference (U.S. Pat. No. 6,587,688), and to claim 4 based on Houde et al., Chambers et al. and Koster.

The Applicant believes that the pending claims are patentable over the cited references, and respectfully requests withdrawal of these rejections. Further, the invention of these claims pre-dates the December 9, 1999 priority date of the Chambers et al. patent. Enclosed is a declaration from the inventor attesting to the fact that the claimed invention was conceived of and diligently constructively reduced to practice prior to December 9, 1999.

Applicant is hopeful that this submission will bring to close the lengthy prosecution of this application, which has been pending over five years since the December 15, 1999 provisional filing. If, however, the Office believes further searching is necessary, Applicant believes any new action should be of non-final status. Moreover, Applicant respectfully requests that Examiner Perez-Gutierrez telephone the undersigned so that any remaining matters can be addressed more expeditiously.

Authorization to charge the extension fee to Deposit Account 17-0055 is provided in the enclosed petition. Any other fees deemed necessary should also be charged to that deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,
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